

**CHAPTER FOUR  
PUBLIC HEALTH PROTECTION**

**CHAPTER OUTLINE**

**Regulatory Issues**

- Contamination of seafood
- Health risks associated with contact recreation

**Federal Legislation**

- Clean Water Act
- Water Quality Act

**Federal Regulatory Agencies**

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Coast Guard

**State Legislation and Regulations**

- Texas Health and Safety Code

**State Regulatory Agencies**

- Texas Department of Health

**Local Regulations**

- Local health ordinances

***EXISTING AND POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS***

This chapter addresses those regulatory programs which directly regulate the public health impacts of activities within the Christmas Bay watershed. Christmas Bay is a well known fishing area and is an important nursery for many types of marine life. Important considerations for public health are the effects of upstream water use on contact recreation and fish populations.

***FEDERAL REGULATORY AGENCIES***

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

EPA is the final review and approval authority over state surface water quality standards. If a state's standards are not consistent with national goals of the Clean Water Act, EPA has the authority to require that the standards be adjusted for consistency.

**United States Coast Guard**

The Coast Guard is usually the agency of first response for chemical spills and, depending on the size of the spill, is the lead agency for the national emergency response team. The

lead role is shared with the EPA. Clean-up efforts are coordinated with the Corps of Engineers. If a spill may have public health implications then the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta is requested to join the team.

## ***TEXAS REGULATORY AGENCIES***

### **Texas Department of Health**

#### ***Division of Shellfish Sanitation***

The Division of Shellfish Sanitation in the Texas Department of Health monitors fish and shellfish species caught in Texas waters to insure that they are safe for human consumption. TDH also conducts studies to identify areas likely to be contaminated by stormwater runoff.

TDH's Epidemiological Division reviews results of testing to determine the public health risk associated with chemical or bacterial contamination of fish or shellfish. Any serious problems discovered by the Division of Shellfish Sanitation are reported to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, which is responsible for enforcement. The Division of Shellfish Sanitation will classify areas as opened or closed to shellfish harvest when human health risks are discovered and mark the area as polluted. The Division of Shellfish Sanitation also permits and regulates shellfish processing plants.

#### ***Contact Recreation***

TDH works in concert with local government health agencies in making determinations to close waters to contact recreation if there are potential public health risks.